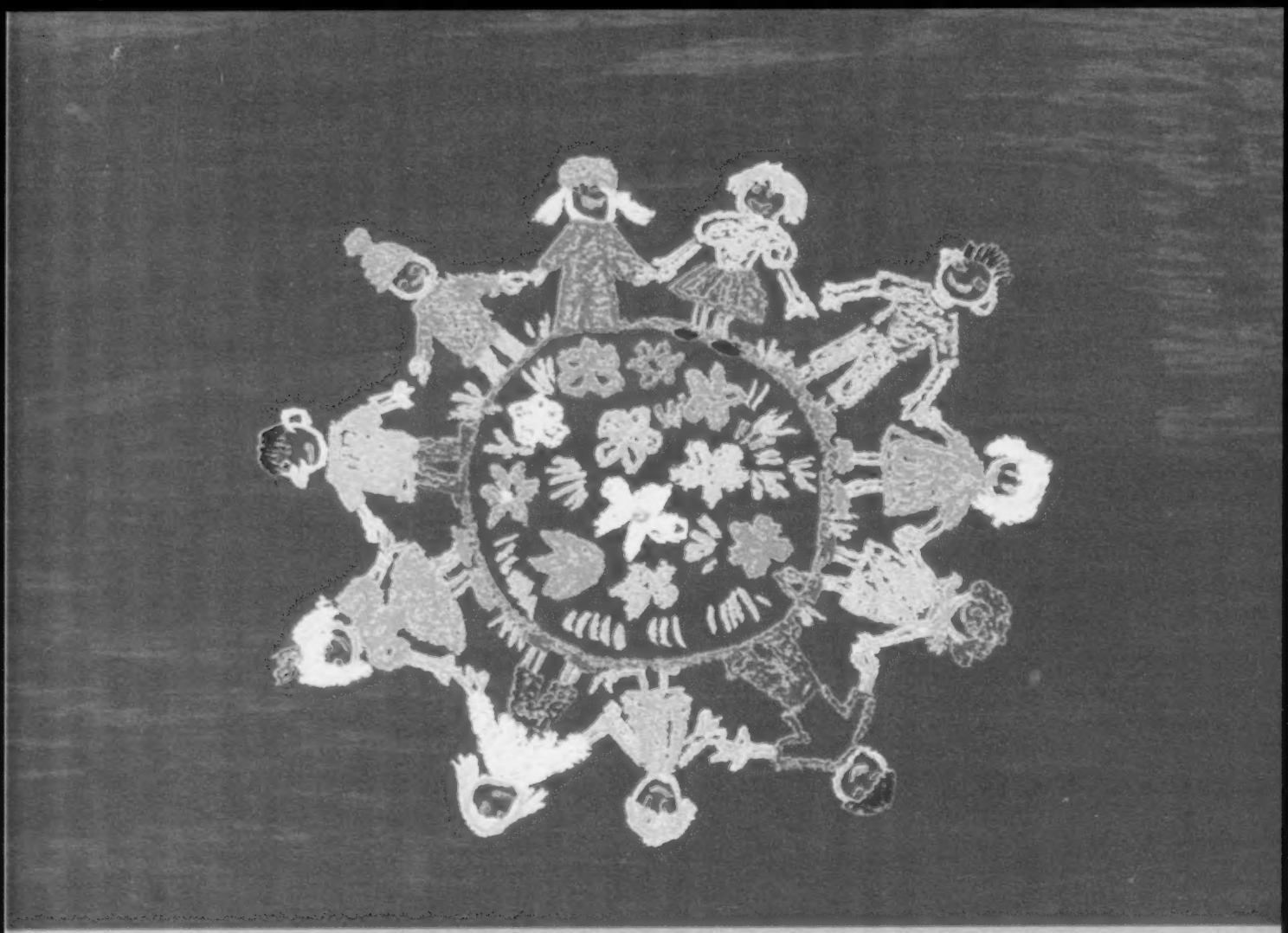


REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Annual Report

April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011

Sept. 27, 2011

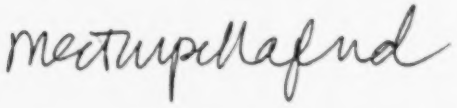
The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

It is my pleasure to present to the Legislative Assembly the 2010/11 Annual Report of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth.

This report covers the period April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 and has been prepared in accordance with part 5, section 19 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act.*

Yours sincerely,



Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth
Province of British Columbia

pc: Mr. Craig James
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Joan McIntyre
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

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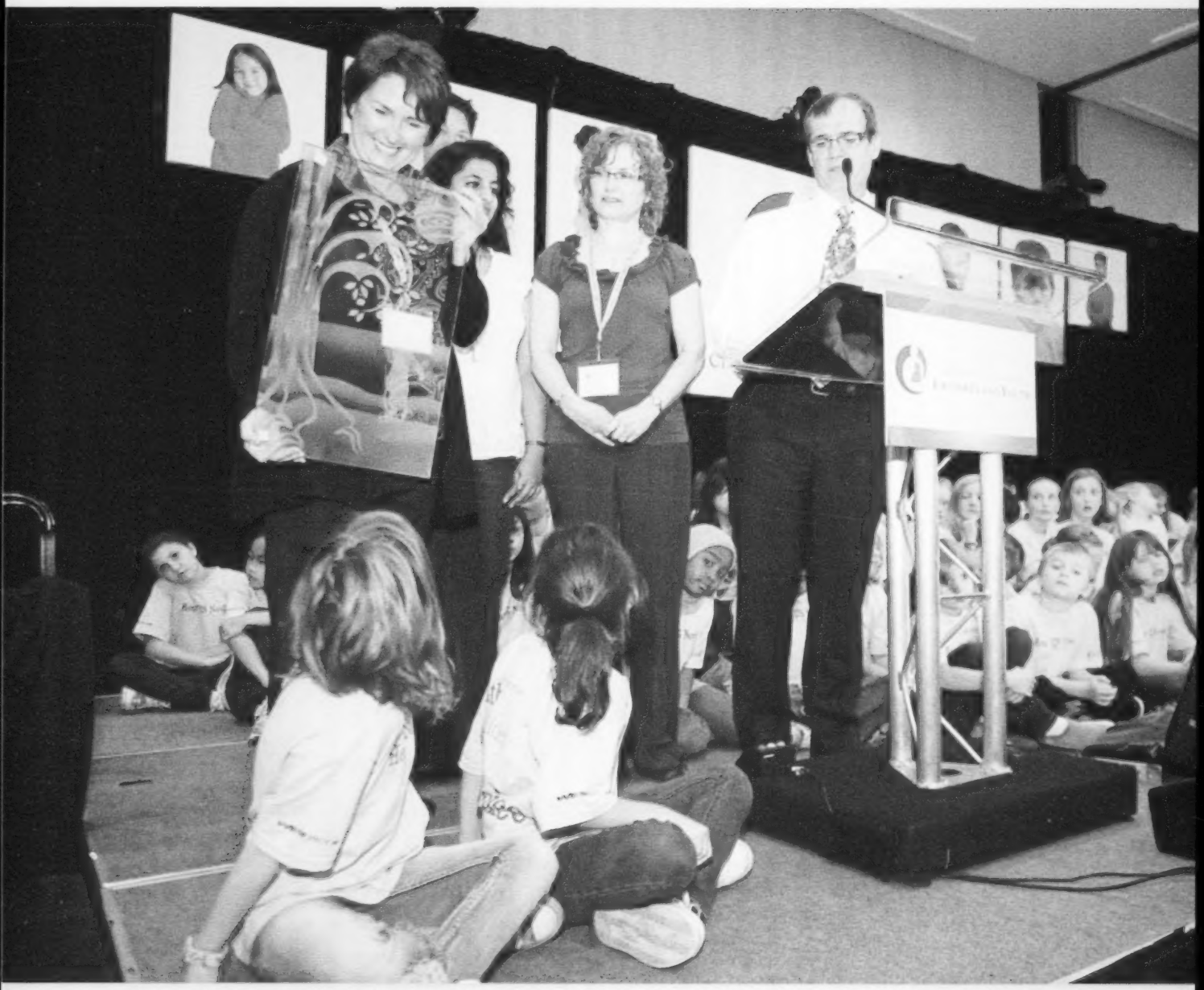


Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond accepts a thank-you from the School District 43 choir at the 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit in Vancouver.

REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Message from the Representative

The year 2010/11 was one of great significance for our Office. It marked a long-awaited turning point in the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth's interaction with government. As this annual report went to press, we had begun to forge a new and much more constructive relationship in which children and youth are being placed at the forefront and the oversight function is beginning to work as intended.

There is always a necessary tension between public agencies and independent bodies mandated to review their work. However, the levels of resistance we encountered from government in our first few years were frustrating and, far too often, disheartening and counterproductive. That began to shift in 2010/11 with a change in political leadership and in senior leadership positions at the Ministry of Children and Family Development. By the end of the fiscal year, we were seeing a true sense of partnership develop, with government accepting and welcoming our insights, openly discussing important issues and moving quickly to implement a number of our key past recommendations.

Another milestone came in November, when our Office released its final report on the implementation of the Hughes Review. Ordered by the government in 2005 and completed in 2006, the review was widely acclaimed as an incisive, accurate and thoughtful look at the challenges facing British Columbia's child- and youth-serving system. It made 62 recommendations, chief among them creation of an independent Representative whose mandate would include regular assessments of the government's progress in implementing the recommendations.

With the release of our final Hughes progress report, we are moving on to different methods of assessing improvements to the system, some of them in collaboration with the ministry. We are also moving forward with a new approach to measuring the well-being of all of B.C.'s children and youth, in partnership with the Provincial Health Officer (PHO).

In October, we released a joint report called *Growing Up in B.C.* to help all British Columbians – policy-makers, elected officials, researchers, community members, parents and young people themselves – understand the social and physical realities faced by children and youth every day. Our goal is to stimulate dialogue and action on behalf of children's well-being, with follow-up reports to highlight improvements and areas needing more attention. In that way, *Growing Up in B.C.* provides a baseline against which we can measure future progress. In the meantime, we are working closely with the PHO to develop an even broader set of child well-being indicators, which will be released in 2011.

The past year also saw the release of our Office's first aggregate review, a collective look at deaths that occurred under similar circumstances. *Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems: Strengthening Supports for Vulnerable Infants* examined the issues and circumstances surrounding the deaths of 21 children who died before their second birthdays. The intent of this review was not to look for blame or assign fault but rather to understand the system of services and supports involved in these children's lives, to determine how the systems worked and to recommend improvements in supports to vulnerable families.

We also released a special report that highlighted gaps and shortcomings in the system of reporting critical injuries and deaths to our Office. This report was accepted by the ministry and has far-reaching implications; it means our Office will be receiving many more critical injury reports in 2011 and beyond. This will complicate statistical comparisons with years prior to 2011. However, it is an important development on behalf of the children and youth whose stories and experiences would have previously "fallen through the cracks" in the Ministry of Children and Family Development's reporting system.

In terms of our service to individual children, youth and families, this past year saw an increase in the numbers of people seeking help from our advocacy program. Overall, the number of cases was up four per cent from the previous year, largely due to a growing awareness of our Office and its services. During November, our staff opened 192 new cases, the highest monthly total ever. Since 2007, we have helped more than 6,000 children, youth and their families to access government supports and services they needed and were entitled to.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the work of all our staff and the difference they continue to make in the lives of children, youth and families. Bearing witness to injustice and suffering is deeply emotional, challenging work that demands high levels of expertise, focus and commitment. I also want to acknowledge the work of the countless professionals on the front lines of child-serving organizations who often struggle to do their best in a complex and frequently shifting policy environment. I look forward to working more closely with them to better serve vulnerable children and families.

In a perfect world, our Office would not exist. There would be no need. All children would get the best possible start in life, have the opportunities and resources they need to learn and thrive, and be supported to make healthy choices and decisions as they move into adulthood.

In reality, it's helpful to remember that most of our young people do have those supports and, as we reported in *Growing Up in B.C.*, most are doing well in their lives. At the same time, society can never turn its back on those young people who are not doing well. Far too many are abused and neglected. Far too many go to bed hungry. And as long as children's needs remain unmet, the work of our Office will remain an essential part of strengthening the province's quality of life.

Like the children whose voices our Office represents, we still face significant challenges. However, as the fiscal year drew to a close, we felt a renewed sense of optimism. We were encouraged by the new Premier's stated commitment to a "families first" agenda and even more encouraged by our stronger, more positive relationships with leaders at MCFD. In this spirit, we have every reason to expect greater progress in the year ahead and to see continued, real improvements in the services available to British Columbia's most vulnerable children, youth and families.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth

September 2011

Staff of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth

REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

About the Representative's Office

Vision

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth is:

An organization highly valued for championing the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families that result in better lives for children and youth.

Mandate

Advocacy – Every child and youth in British Columbia has the right to be healthy, safe, educated and heard. The dedicated team of advocates in the Representative for Children and Youth's Office is committed to providing information, advice and support to vulnerable people under 19 years of age who need help dealing with the services or programs provided or funded by government.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research – Ensuring children and youth across the province have access to the services and programs they need to support their health, safety, education and well-being is a significant focus for the Representative's Office. The monitoring team evaluates government-funded programs and services, publicly reports on them and performs research with the objective of improving the lives of vulnerable children and youth.

Reviews and Investigations of Critical Injuries and Deaths – If a child or youth receiving services considered "reviewable" under the Representative's legislation dies or is critically injured, the Representative can conduct reviews and investigations and work with other public bodies to recommend improvements to services to prevent similar injuries or deaths in the future.

What are reviewable services?

The *Representative for Children and Youth Act* gives the Representative independent powers to review, investigate, monitor and report in cases where a child or family was receiving reviewable services. These include:

- services provided under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*
- services provided under the *Youth Justice Act*
- mental health and addiction services for children
- the Child in the Home of a Relative program
- additional designated services, which include but are not limited to family support, adoption, guardianship, services for children and youth with disabilities, early childhood development and child care services, and services for youth in their transition to adulthood.

Goals

1. Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, having their voices heard and considered, and being active participants in decisions affecting them.
2. The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.
3. The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse, neglect and exposure to violence.
4. The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, objective, open, collaborative and accountable way.

RCY staff proudly wear pink in support of Anti-bullying day, Feb. 23, 2011.

The Representative

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has served as B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth since April 2007. As an Independent Officer of the Legislature she works not for the government but for the province's children and youth, bringing their voices and needs to the government's attention so it can improve its services.

The Representative is currently on leave from her role as a judge in the Saskatchewan Provincial Court. She holds a doctorate of law from Harvard, a master's degree from Cambridge and a law degree from Osgoode Hall. She has also been a tenured professor of law at Dalhousie University.

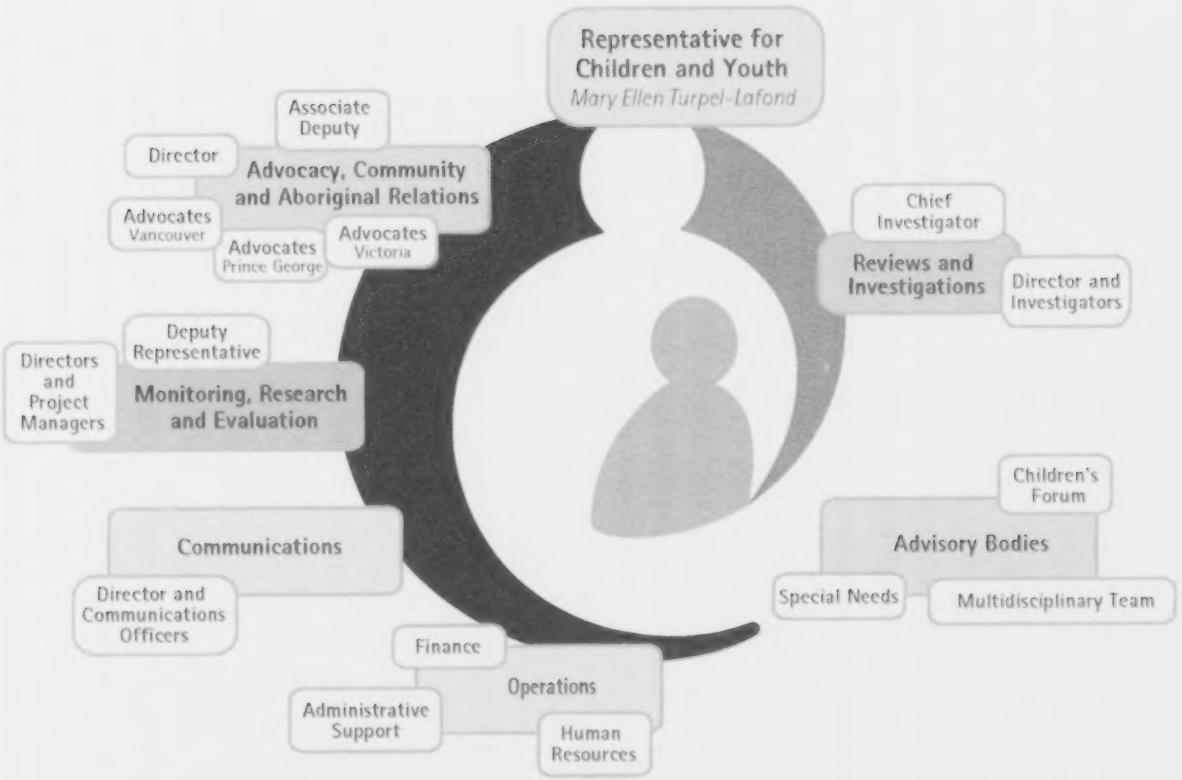
Throughout her career, she has focused on developing partnerships to better serve the needs of youth in the justice system, especially those who are sexually exploited and those with disabilities, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

The Representative is a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan and the proud mother of four young children.

The Representative gave this year's annual Dr. Richard B. Splane Lecture in Social Policy to the UBC School of Social Work on Nov. 9, 2010.

Left to right standing: Dr Tim Stainton, Interim Director, School of Social Work UBC; Dr Leonard Angel, President, World Federalist Movement, Vancouver Branch; Anna Terrana, Director, United Nations Association in Canada, Vancouver Branch; Jim Siemens, Director, UNAC Vancouver Branch; Patsy George, President UNAC Vancouver Branch. Sitting: Dr Verna Huffman-Splane, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Dr Richard B. Splane.

The RCY Office – Organizational Structure



Reporting and Collaboration

The Representative works closely with the following organizations to further the Office's mandate:

The Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

The Select Standing Committee is an all-party committee of the legislature, which serves as the Representative's primary link to the government. It has the authority to:

- receive and review the Representative's annual service plan
- have the Representative report to it at least annually
- refer critical injuries or deaths of children to the Representative for investigation
- receive and consider all reports and plans delivered by the Representative to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The Children's Forum

The Representative chairs the Children's Forum, which was established in 2007 in response to a recommendation from the B.C. Child and Youth Review. The forum's membership comprises the Chief Coroner, the Ombudsperson, the Public Guardian and Trustee, the Provincial Health Officer and senior leaders from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Representative's Office.

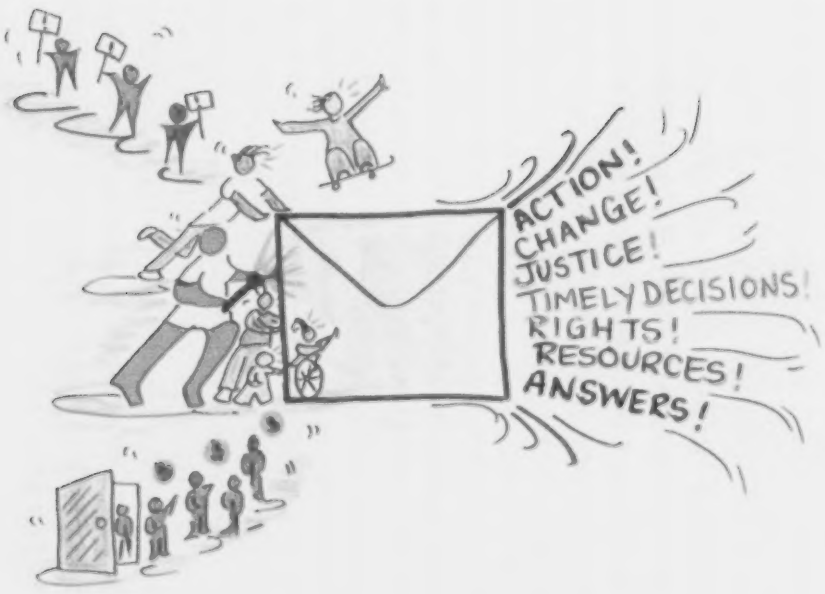
The purpose of the forum is to share information, coordinate efforts on behalf of and improve service to vulnerable children and youth in the province. In particular, the forum provides an opportunity for discussion and collaboration on common matters regarding critical injury and death reviews and investigations involving children and youth.

The Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates

The council is a national alliance of children's advocates appointed by provincial and territorial governments. Their respective offices work with children and youth on a daily basis to promote better outcomes for them and to encourage their participation and involvement in society.

The council plays an important role in informing governments and the general public of concerns involving the rights, status and well-being of vulnerable children and youth on a national level. In June 2010, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth was elected council president.

Driving Policy



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

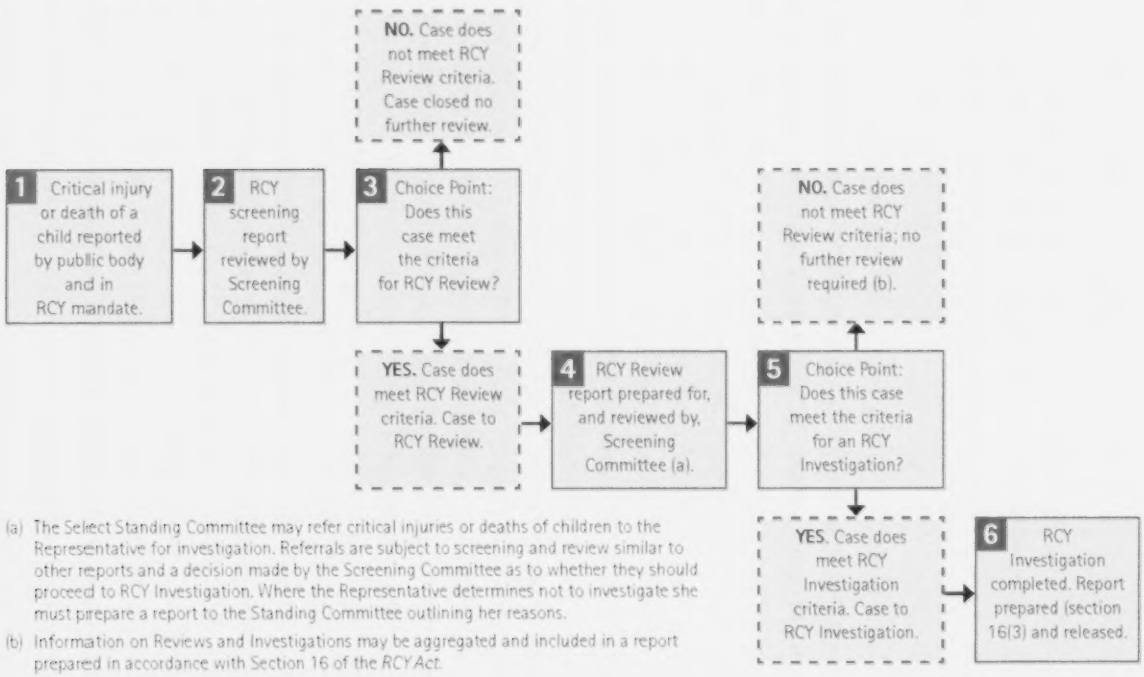
Critical Injuries and Deaths – Reviews and Investigations

When a child dies unexpectedly or suffers a critical injury, along with the heartbreak come difficult questions: Why did this happen? What were the circumstances? And what, if anything, can be done to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening again?

In cases where the child or family had been receiving reviewable public services, including those related to child welfare, mental health, addiction and youth justice systems, those deeply personal questions take on an added, public dimension. That's where the Representative's Office comes in, providing independent, arm's-length oversight and seeking to ensure that, wherever possible, service providers and society in general advance their understanding of the needs and realities of vulnerable children and families.

Under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, the Representative has a mandate to review the deaths and critical injuries of children and youth who had at any time in the previous year received reviewable services.

The Review and Investigation Process


1 Critical injury or death of a child reported by public body and in RCY mandate.
2 RCY screening report reviewed by Screening Committee.
3 Choice Point: Does this case meet the criteria for RCY Review?
NO. Case does not meet RCY Review criteria. Case closed no further review.
YES. Case does meet RCY Review criteria. Case to RCY Review.
4 RCY Review report prepared for, and reviewed by, Screening Committee (a).
5 Choice Point: Does this case meet the criteria for an RCY Investigation?
NO. Case does not meet RCY Review criteria; no further review required (b).
YES. Case does meet RCY Investigation criteria. Case to RCY Investigation.
6 RCY Investigation completed. Report prepared (section 16(3) and released.

(a) The Select Standing Committee may refer critical injuries or deaths of children to the Representative for investigation. Referrals are subject to screening and review similar to other reports and a decision made by the Screening Committee as to whether they should proceed to RCY Investigation. Where the Representative determines not to investigate she must prepare a report to the Standing Committee outlining her reasons.

(b) Information on Reviews and Investigations may be aggregated and included in a report prepared in accordance with Section 16 of the *RCY Act*.

Receiving Reports

The Ministry of Children and Family Development reports the death or injury to the Representative's Office. Since the Office's inception, about 200 incidents have been reported each year by MCFD.

Screening

Each report is screened to determine if service-delivery issues may have been a factor in the death or critical injury. Where such concerns are identified, the case becomes the subject of a more in-depth review.

In about 50 per cent of cases, no service-delivery issues are identified. These include situations where, for example, the child was medically fragile and the death was expected or the cause was clearly accidental. Although they may not meet the criteria for a Representative's review, some of these cases may be flagged for inclusion in a future aggregate review, which is designed to identify broad trends and patterns that can inform improvements to the child- and family- serving system.

Case Profile: Death of a child in care

A 12-year-old girl died on impact after losing control of the vehicle she was driving. The coroner's report stated that the principal cause of death was blunt force head injury, with acute alcohol intoxication being a contributory factor.

Background:

This First Nations youth grew up witnessing violence in her home. Her parents struggled with addictions, and her mother said she drank during pregnancy. Although the girl was in government care, there was no documentation of a Risk Reduction Service Plan or Comprehensive Risk Assessment, which were required by policy and standards. Nor was there any indication that fetal alcohol exposure was assessed.

The girl was in and out of care on a voluntary basis and moved six times in the six months prior to her death. She struggled with alcohol abuse and engaged in high-risk behaviours, such as taking quantities of pills and being found passed out in local parks.

Relatives were unable to meet her needs, and there were no appropriate resources in her home community. The girl was willing to attend a residential treatment program, but none in the area accepted children under 13. She was referred to the Maples program, a provincial resource in the Lower Mainland, but did not attend.

The night before she died, she was hospitalized for severe intoxication but released after less than an hour. Nurses advised that they "don't usually see people for intoxication."

Conclusions:

The review concluded that there were inadequate resources in the girl's home community, that individual and family assessments were not thorough and that there was a lack of coordinated, long-term planning. This death may be further investigated as practices and policies of a public body may have contributed and the death may have been self-inflicted.

Conducting Reviews

Approximately 100 cases are reviewed each year to determine if they warrant a full investigation. The process is lengthy and requires great care.

Each review involves the analysis of files from MCFD, which in many cases include thousands of pages, as well as any relevant files from police departments, health care providers, contracted service providers and others involved with the child or family. Case reviews may also include analysis of regional and provincial polices and standards, consultation with the B.C. Coroners Service and discussions with service providers or caregivers.

A small number of case reviews result in full investigations. This more thorough process is initiated at the Representative's discretion, typically when a review determines that:

- the circumstances are suspicious
- the death or critical injury was self-inflicted or inflicted by someone else
- abuse or neglect may have been a factor, or
- services the child or family received may have played a part in the injury or death.

Aggregate Reviews

In January 2011, the Representative's Office released *Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems: Strengthening Supports for Vulnerable Infants*, its first aggregate review – a collective look at deaths that occurred under similar circumstances. The aggregate approach examines patterns and trends, allowing society to learn from these tragedies and see if there are ways to improve systems of support for vulnerable families.

Aggregate reviews are more analytical and less personal than others done by the Representative's Office. They result in public reports, which may include recommendations to improve the child-serving system.

Conducting Investigations

Investigations by the Representative's Office thoroughly and rigorously examine the system of supports provided to a child or family up to and including the time of the death or injury. They are carried out by the Representative, her Chief Investigator and a dedicated staff of investigators and research analysts.

Subject matter experts are retained when specific knowledge and expertise are needed. For example, in a case involving a child with special needs or a medical condition, experts in that area may be consulted to provide an additional level of insight and understanding.

All case-related records are reviewed, along with relevant legislation, policies and standards.

Interviews are conducted under oath with numerous individuals. These interviews are recorded and transcribed as part of the investigative process.

Members of the child's community may also be consulted. For example, in cases involving Aboriginal children, community members and leaders are engaged to ensure that their voice is not disregarded and that their unique history with the child-serving system is respected and considered. The Representative and her staff work closely with the First Nations Directors Forum, the First Nations Leadership Council and other Aboriginal organizations to keep them informed and engaged in this work.

Draft investigation reports are reviewed by the Representative's Multidisciplinary Team, which brings together expertise from the following areas and organizations:

- policing
- BC Coroners Service
- B.C. Injury Research Prevention Unit
- Aboriginal community
- pediatric medicine and child maltreatment/ child protection specialists
- nursing
- education
- pathology
- special needs and developmental disabilities
- public health
- Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Under the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, the Representative's Office can only proceed with investigations after police and criminal court proceedings are completed. If there are no criminal proceedings, the RCY investigation can proceed when other processes, such as ministry reviews or coroner's inquests, are completed, or one year after the incident, whichever is earlier.

Case Profile: Critical injury of a child in care

An infant in foster care choked and stopped breathing. A CT scan revealed a brain hemorrhage, and medical staff suspected shaken baby syndrome. Other foster children were removed from the home, and an investigation was initiated. The injured child is currently in care in a staffed specialized home. She has severe neurological impairment and must be tube-fed.

Background:

The baby was removed from her family at birth. Her parents were homeless and lived in deep poverty, with intergenerational effects of substance abuse and neglect. Various social services were involved but were neither effective nor consistent.

The foster home where the baby was placed had been the subject of more than 30 reports of concern in areas including lack of hygiene, inappropriate discipline and lack of supervision. A resource social worker addressed the concerns informally, rather than by providing the foster parent with more training or by conducting a formal protocol investigation. At the time of the injury, the baby was with a relief caregiver hired by the foster parent. The foster home remains open.

Conclusions:

The main issues identified in this review include no documentation of the foster parent's practice with respect to hiring relief staff, a lack of practice audits of resource services or compliance to foster home standards, and the need for a resource social worker training program.

This infant's critical injury may be further investigated as practices and policies related to foster homes may have contributed to this incident.

Once the Multidisciplinary Team has provided input, the draft report is sent, on a confidential basis, to those organizations and individuals who have been interviewed or are otherwise affected. They review the draft for administrative fairness and their input is considered in developing a final report.

The final report, including recommendations for improvements to the child-serving system, is then released publicly by the Representative. Recommendations are monitored over time to help ensure they are implemented.

Summary of Activities in 2010/11

During the period covered by this report, 88 deaths and 136 critical injuries of children and youth were reported to the Representative's Office. As shown in Table 1 below, after their initial screening, a total of 116 cases met the criteria for further review.

Table 1: Reports and Reviews

	Reported to RCY	Selected for Review
Critical Injuries	136	82
Fatalities	88	34
Total	**224**	**116**

Of the 116 cases selected for review, 55 involved Aboriginal children. Their numbers are tracked in light of their historic over-representation in the child welfare system.

As shown in Table 2, the majority of critical injuries involved children and youth in care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. By contrast, most of those whose deaths were reviewed were not in government care.

Table 2: Further Detail on Cases Selected for Review

	Critical Injuries		Deaths	
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Not in Care	13	13	22	8
In Care	24	32	2	2
Total	**37**	**45**	**24**	**10**

Critical Injuries and Deaths

Critical injuries selected for review during the fiscal year included those caused by accidents, attempted suicides, exposure to or involvement in high-risk situations such as sexual assaults, or being a victim of violence. Deaths selected for review consisted of suicides, homicides and accidents.

Causes and Gender Distribution

Tables 3 and 4 below provide further details on causes of the deaths and injuries reviewed, as well as their gender distribution. The higher number of females in both areas is not considered statistically significant, especially in only one year of data. However, there does appear to be a link between girls and cases involving self-harm. This may be explored further in a future aggregate review.

Table 3

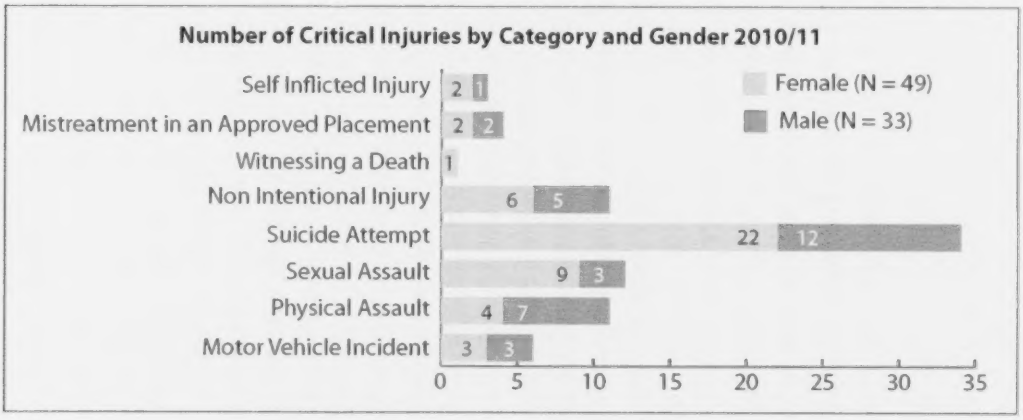
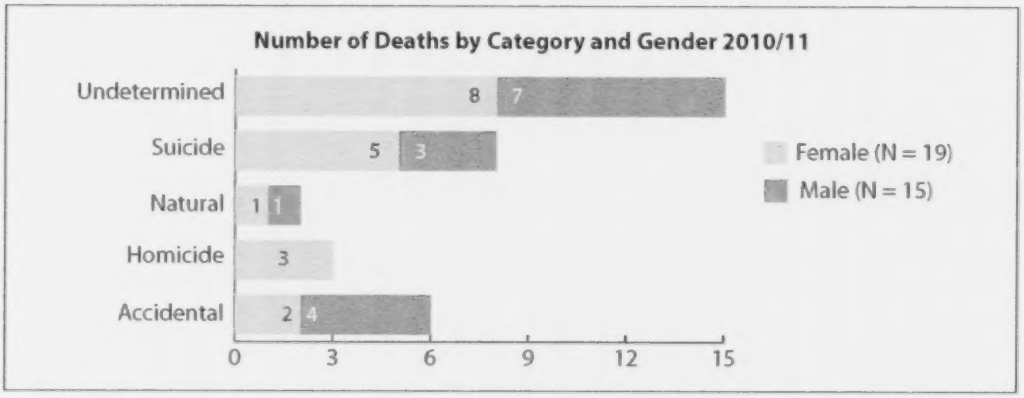


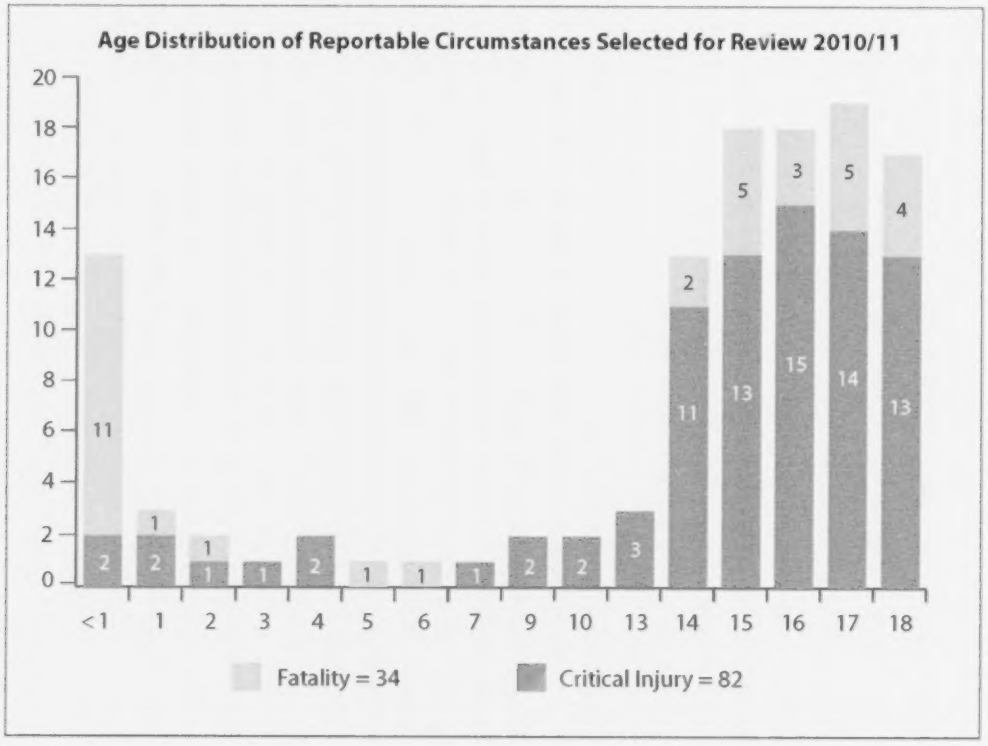
Table 4



Age Distribution

Consistent with historical trends, most of the children whose cases were reviewed were infants or teenagers (see Table 5). Both groups have their particular vulnerabilities. Very young children are completely dependent on caregivers and have no ability to speak for or defend themselves, while teenagers are more likely than any other age group to engage in a variety of risky behaviours.

Table 5



Case Profile: Critical injury of a child not in care

This 18-month-old girl, who was in a relative's custody, was left with her mother. While there, she ate some crystal meth, fell off a couch, hit her head and had a seizure. She was admitted to hospital and had no lasting brain damage. Following this incident, she was placed with a different relative, who was granted custody under the *Family Relations Act*.

Background:

This little girl was removed from her mother's care when she was eight months old. Her father was in jail at the time, and she was placed with a relative whose home was being studied as a potential restricted foster home. A delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) granted the family multiple 60-day exemptions allowing the infant to stay in the relative's home while it was still in the process of being studied. The mother had regular visits with the girl. These were supposed to be supervised, but there was no supervision in place when the incident in question occurred. The DAA later learned that the mother had more than one unauthorized, unsupervised overnight visit.

Conclusions:

This review did not establish that a reviewable service or the policies or practices of a public body or director may have contributed to this child's critical injury. However, it highlights the need to ensure that protocols and processes for determining legal custody are in the child's best interests and that supervised access visits with family members are being adequately monitored to ensure the child is safe. The case is included in an aggregate review of critical injuries of children under the age of two.

Case Profile: Critical injury of a child in care

This 16-year-old went to a party and returned to her group home with welts, cuts and bruises. She said she had been in a fight but did not provide any details and did not want to go to the hospital or speak to police. She said she was fine, and she was monitored by group home staff overnight. She was seen by a hospital physician the next day and was treated for facial bruising. She made a full recovery.

Background:

This girl came to the attention of the child welfare system when she returned to B.C. from another province, where she'd been living with a relative. Neither parent was willing or able to care for her and a delegated Aboriginal Agency took her into care. She had brief contact with mental health professionals and an addictions counsellor and was hospitalized more than once after suicide attempts. Although her doctor prescribed medication for anxiety and depression, there was no documentation on file that a full psychiatric assessment was ever completed.

Conclusions:

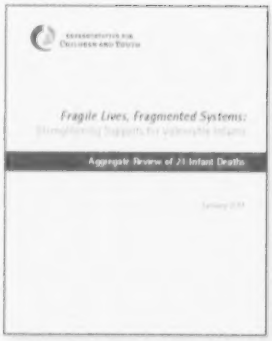
The review did not establish that a reviewable service or the policies or practices of a public body or director may have contributed to the injury. However, the case outlines some of the challenges in working with youth who struggle with both addiction and mental health issues. This review found that staff and caregivers attempted to engage the youth using several creative strategies, but the resources and services offered appeared to have little impact.

This case will be included in an aggregate review of adolescent critical injuries.

RCY Investigations

The Representative's Office released two significant investigation reports in 2010/11:

Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems: Strengthening Supports for Vulnerable Infants



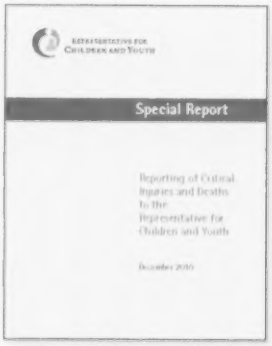
This aggregate review, the first issued by the Representative's Office, looks into the lives of 21 infants who died between June 1, 2007 and May 1, 2009. All of the children were under the age of two, and all their families were involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

An aggregate review is a collective look at deaths that occurred under similar circumstances. The goal is to identify and analyze trends that will inform improvements to the child welfare system as well as broader public policy initiatives.

All of the infants in this review were born into families facing challenges, including serious poverty, inadequate housing and fragmented systems that failed to provide the supports they needed. All the infants died unexpectedly in unsafe sleep arrangements.

The review makes seven recommendations, including a call for a non-partisan, province-wide child poverty plan and more support for at-risk expectant mothers. The report is available at www.rcybc.ca.

Special Report – Reporting of Critical Injuries and Deaths to the Representative for Children and Youth



This report was prompted by an incident in which the RCY Office learned through the media of a critical injury to a child with special needs. Even though the child and family were involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the ministry did not report this critical injury to the Representative. Analysis in the Representative's special report focused on the ministry's policy for reporting critical injuries to RCY, a policy that pre-dated RCY's creation.

Since the release of the special report, the ministry has updated its policy. By the end of 2010/11, significantly higher numbers of critical injuries were being reported to RCY. The special report is available at www.rcybc.ca.

An RCY advocate delivers a Child Right's Workshop at the Gathering Our Voices Youth Conference in Prince Rupert, March 2010.

Advocacy

Navigating government services isn't always easy. Even at the best of times, accessing services can be complex, confusing and frustrating.

The Representative's advocacy staff help ensure that children's rights are respected and they help young people in British Columbia overcome barriers they may face. Advocates respond directly when a child, youth or family requests their help, providing information, advice and support in dealing with the province's family-serving system. They also work to increase awareness of the services available to vulnerable children and youth across the province and to promote and encourage the development of community advocacy organizations through outreach, information, education and support.

Child's rights workshops encourage discussions about children's wants vs. needs vs. rights.

Case Profile: Coping with a parent's medical needs

A single father of three young children had kidney failure and was waiting for a transplant. He needed dialysis seven days a week, and although he was able to do the procedure at home, it took eight hours, meaning he was unavailable to pick up his children after school. A child care centre seemed like the answer, but this father was on a disability pension and couldn't afford the full cost of care. He qualified for the Child Care Subsidy but still had to pay $150 a month, which he could not afford.

Action:

A nurse in the hospital renal unit where the father was an outpatient contacted RCY to help with a solution. The family was Aboriginal, and she'd already asked for help from the local delegated Aboriginal Agency, but staff there said they could not provide assistance. RCY spoke with the agency, explained the situation and helped set up a support agreement whereby the agency paid $150 a month to the child care centre on the father's behalf.

Outcome:

Once his child care concerns were addressed, this father was able to focus his attention on taking care of his health, completing his dialysis in the daytime and resting. That gave him renewed opportunities to spend quality time with his children, helping to support the whole family's well-being.

"Sometimes advocacy simply means pushing for all involved parties to come to the table to work together towards a solution."

– RCY advocate

I know about the Office of the Representative and the Ombudsperson and have been assisted to contact them!

Summary of Activities in 2010/11

Between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011, RCY advocacy staff took on 1,716 new cases. That's a four per cent increase from the previous year, mainly due to growing awareness of the Representative's Office and the services it offers children and youth, including advocacy.

November 2010 was the program's busiest month on record, with advocates taking on 192 new cases. During the year, the average number of new cases per month was 142.

Since the Office's inception in April 2007, RCY advocates have taken on 6,118 cases.

The number of cases opened by RCY advocates represents only one aspect of their work. For example, sometimes people call the RCY Office looking for help with issues that are outside the Office's mandate. These individuals are not turned away. RCY advocates work with them to provide information, links to resources, and other options that may be available to help address their concerns.

"I have been inspired by this family's tireless efforts, as they navigate complex systems that have undergone significant operational, policy and funding changes, to bring their concerns to key decision-makers." - RCY advocate

Case Profile: Keeping the child's needs at the forefront

A young boy with special needs was in the continuing custody of a delegated Aboriginal Agency. Due to medical concerns of her own, his caregiver felt unable to support him and found another home, a respite resource, where the boy seemed to fit right in. The family was already caring for several other children with special needs, but they instantly connected with the boy and wanted to take him into their home. The Aboriginal Agency agreed the home would be ideal, but the Ministry of Children and Family Development did not agree, and efforts to find a new placement stalled.

Action:

The boy's caregiver called the RCY advocate, who spoke directly to MCFD on the boy's behalf. The advocate also encouraged the Aboriginal Agency to push forward in its discussions with MCFD. Ultimately, the agency and ministry developed a plan to make sure the boy's best interests were served.

Outcome:

The boy was placed with the new family, where he got a warm welcome. His former caregiver was able to focus on her own health and to rest easily, knowing the boy was with people who understood and could meet his needs.

Sometimes advocacy simply means pushing for all involved parties to come to the table to work together towards a solution. In this case, the advocate's primary role was to get discussions back on track and keep the young boy's rights and interests at the forefront of negotiations.

Case Profile: Making sure a young person gets another chance

A teenage girl in care who was ready to live independently signed a youth agreement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to ensure she would get the support she needed. While she looked for her own apartment, she had a fight with her foster parents, who asked her to leave. With nowhere else to go, she briefly stayed at her mother's house, leading MCFD to advise her that her youth agreement would be terminated.

Action:

The youth called the RCY advocate, who met with everyone involved in the case and wrote a formal letter of complaint on her behalf. MCFD ultimately agreed to a one-month youth agreement, with clear expectations about what she would have to do to have the agreement renewed.

Outcome:

Three months after signing the initial agreement, the youth was living on her own, going to school and doing well. At last report, she was about to sign another six-month youth agreement. As the advocate involved said, this case affirms that sometimes when youth are given just one more chance, they can be successful.

"In this case, adults' inability to resolve their differences became the issue, rather than focusing on the child's needs." – RCY advocate

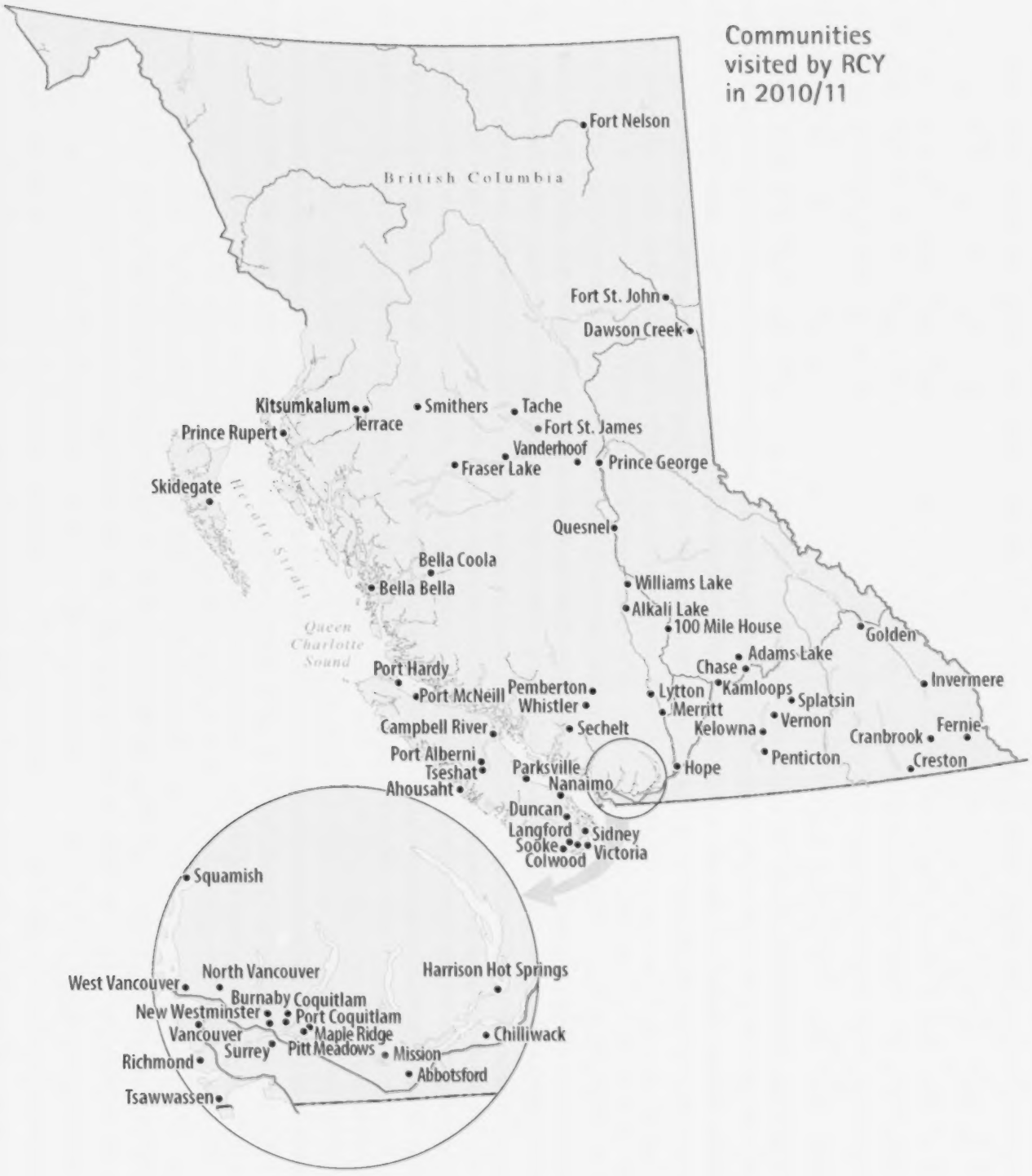

Communities visited by RCY in 2010/11
British Columbia
Fort Nelson
Fort St. John
Dawson Creek
Kitsumkalum
Terrace
Smithers
Tache
Fort St. James
Prince Rupert
Vanderhoof
Fraser Lake
Prince George
Skidegate
Hecate Strait
Quesnel
Bella Coola
Bella Bella
Williams Lake
Alkali Lake
100 Mile House
Golden
Queen Charlotte Sound
Adams Lake
Chase
Port Hardy
Port McNeill
Pemberton
Whistler
Lytton
Kamloops
Invermere
Splatsin
Merritt
Vernon
Campbell River
Sechelt
Kelowna
Cranbrook
Fernie
Port Alberni
Tseshaht
Parksville
Nanaimo
Penticton
Creston
Hope
Ahousaht
Duncan
Langford
Sidney
Sooke
Victoria
Colwood
Squamish
North Vancouver
Harrison Hot Springs
West Vancouver
Burnaby
Coquitlam
New Westminster
Port Coquitlam
Vancouver
Maple Ridge
Chilliwack
Surrey
Pitt Meadows
Mission
Richmond
Abbotsford
Tsawwassen

Table 6

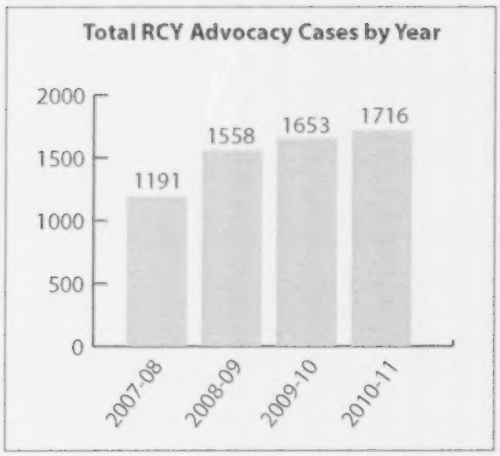
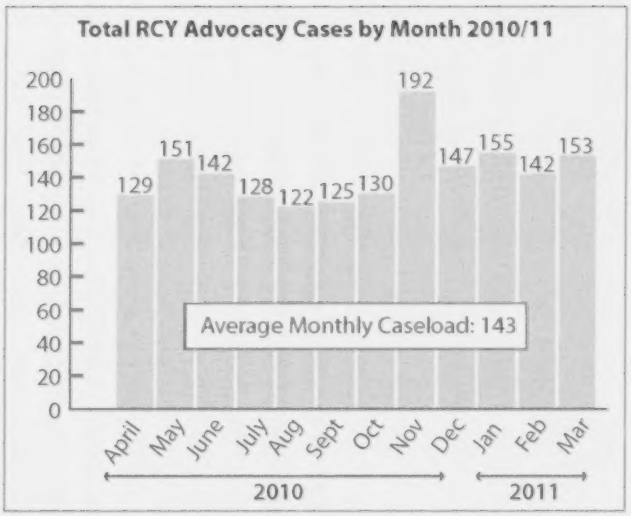


Table 7



Case Profile: Step one – Know your rights

A teenage boy was about to be released from youth custody, and he was scared. His father was emotionally and physically abusive, and the youth asked the Ministry of Children and Family Development if he could be placed with another family. Since he was not in care and the ministry had no protection concerns about his family, his request was denied. Besides, MCFD said, with his record of criminal offences, even if he was in care, they'd have a hard time placing him.

Action:

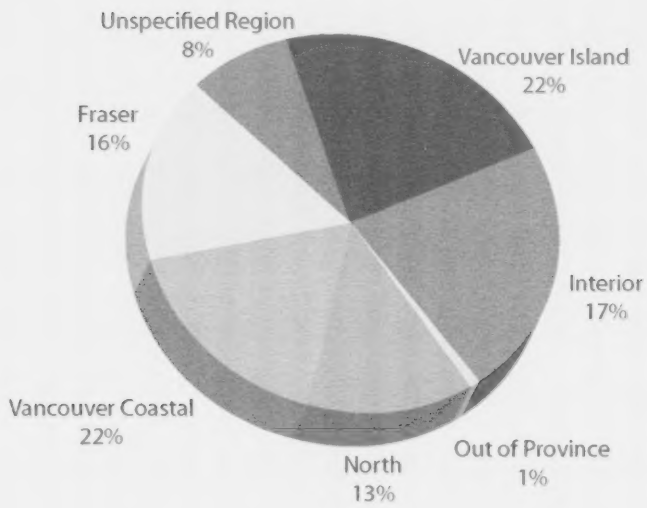
This youth had a supportive team around him, and after taking part in a children's rights workshop, he was ready to speak up. He contacted an RCY advocate, who worked with him and his team to plan for his release and ensure that his views were considered in the process.

Outcome:

The youth was placed in a family friend's home under the Extended Family Program, and MCFD assured him he would not have to go home until he was ready. Counselling supports were put in place to help the family overcome past traumas and work on repairing the parental relationship. The youth felt safe, heard and supported, and although he knows there will be challenges ahead, he's optimistic about his future.

Table 8

Advocacy Caseloads by Regions 2010/11



Case Profile: Helping a child and family make it through the night

A medically fragile 13-year-old, who was deaf, blind and unable to communicate except through facial gestures with people who know her well, had extensive medical issues, including extreme immune deficiency and ongoing severe insomnia. She lived with her parents, who receive funding through the At Home program, but did not have the resources to adequately support her, especially during the night, when they had to stay awake to care for her.

Action:

The family called the RCY Office after the Ministry of Children and Family Development insisted the girl be moved to a residential respite resource either nightly or weekly to address her insomnia. Medical practitioners agreed with the family that this was not an option, given her compromised immune system and her inability to make sense of her environment without her parents.

Outcome:

After many months of consulting with experts, meeting with MCFD managers and investigating the costs and implications of other options, the advocate succeeded in having the girl's needs and rights placed at the forefront. The ministry approved funding for awake night staff in the family home, as well as additional funds for respite support. A social worker will regularly review the situation to ensure that her needs are being met.

Case Profile: Supporting young refugee claimants

Two children who are refugee claimants entered Canada legally from a distant country in 2010. They live with their adult sister, who, upon their arrival, contacted the Ministry of Children and Family Development in hopes of receiving some support for the girls. MCFD informed the family that it had no mandate to help them.

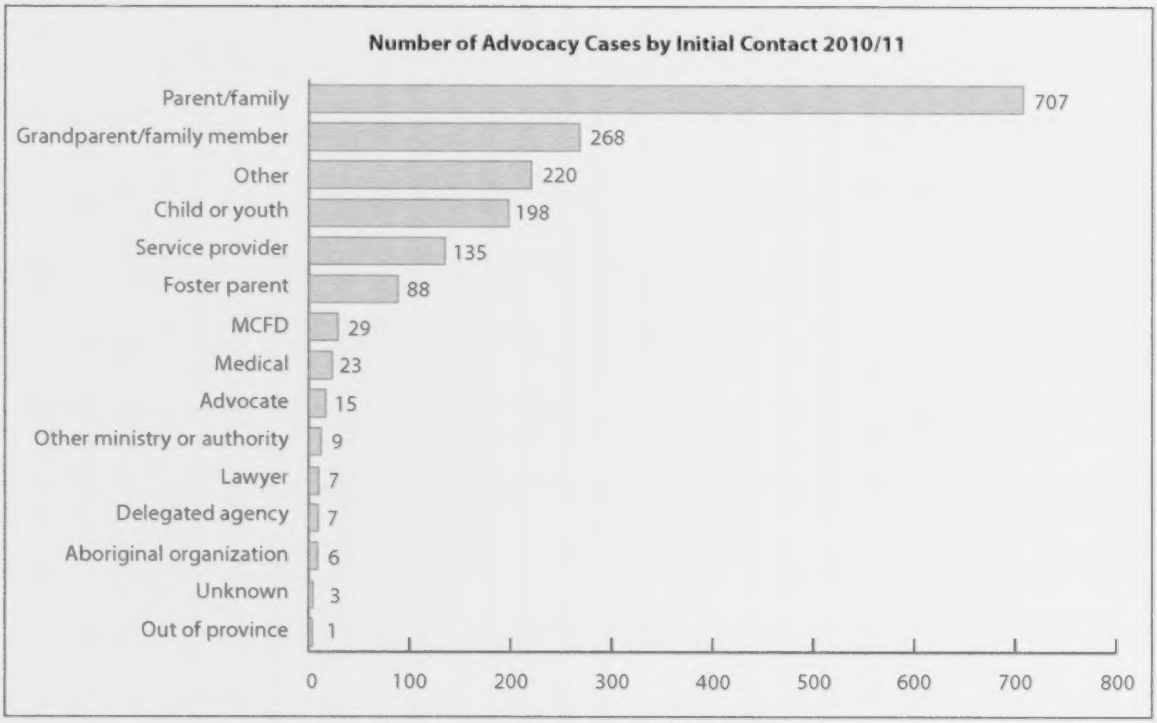
Action:

The family called the RCY Office after MCFD had turned them down a second time. They were in financial difficulty, and as the advocate noted, the girls had a right to a fair assessment of their needs, including whether they needed protection or support services, such as counselling.

Outcome:

After six months of persistent advocacy, emphasizing the girls' rights, MCFD agreed to review the situation. The girls and their sister have now qualified for a full range of supports, backdated by several months to acknowledge the significant time that has passed since they first came to Canada. The ministry's help came just in the nick of time: the sisters, unable to pay their rent, had been facing eviction.

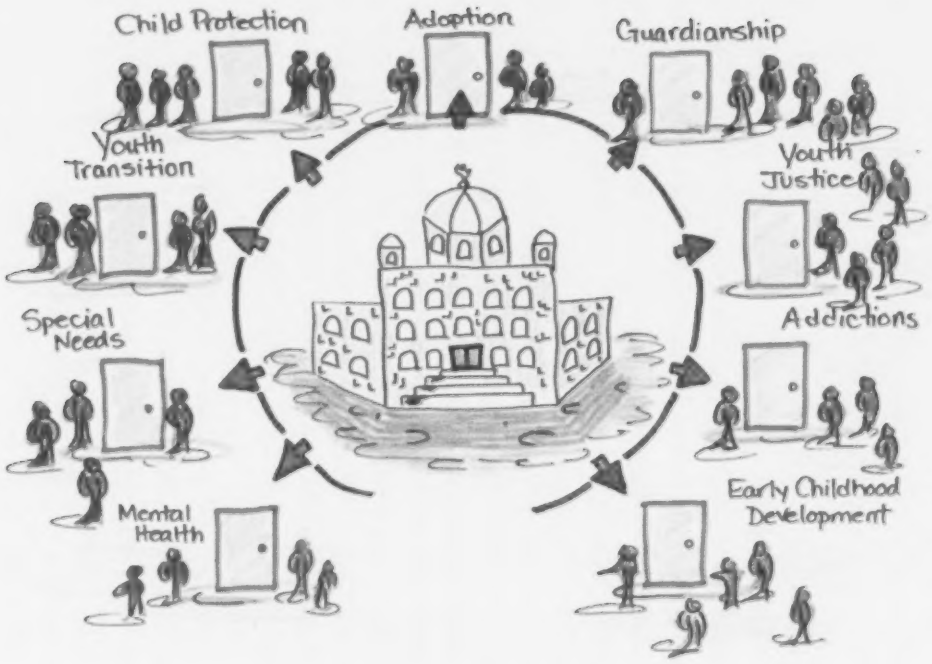
Table 9



Issues Frequently Raised

Table 10: Most Frequently Raised Callers' Issues in Advocacy Cases, Fiscal Year 2010/11		
Not agree with plan/planning process	451	16%
Staff practice	229	8%
Views not considered in plan	168	6%
Family Relations Act court order	162	6%
Denied service	142	5%
Section 13 (*CFCS Act*) Protection concerns not addressed	141	5%
Timeliness	130	5%
Lack of funding/resources	106	4%
Not treated with dignity or respect	101	4%

Designated Services



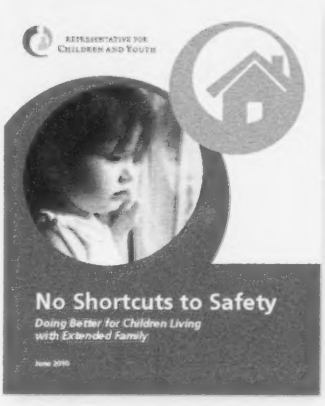
Monitoring, Research, Evaluation and Audit

In addition to advocacy and investigative roles, the Representative works to translate individual issues, reviews and circumstances into a larger understanding of how the system of supports works for children, youth and families. This is the responsibility of the monitoring, research, evaluation and audit program. It helps tie together the strands of individual cases, as well as the Representative's work with outside agencies, and provides important insight into how well the government is serving British Columbia's young people. It also plays a role in gathering data, reviewing relevant literature and supporting the other units of the Office in their work.

The Representative reports publicly on broadly defined or systemic issues, including issuing update reports on the implementation of recommendations that have been previously received by the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. In addition, the Representative monitors very closely a broad range of issues that emerge from meetings, correspondence and public engagements. These are all opportunities to "take the temperature" of the systems of support for vulnerable children and youth.

During 2010/11, the Representative reviewed services for children and youth and made recommendations in the following public reports, which are all available on the Representative's website, at www.rcybc.ca.

No Shortcuts to Safety: Doing Better for Children Living with Extended Family



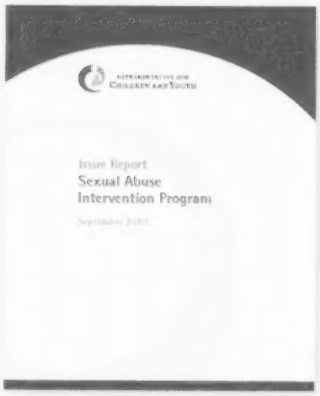
This report presents the results of an in-depth audit of B.C.'s Child in the Home of a Relative (CIHR) program, which at the time of the report supported about 4,500 B.C. children and youth. Although government has now ended the program, those who were under the program at the time of its termination will continue to live with relatives under CIHR for years to come. CIHR provides financial assistance to relatives caring for a child whose parents are unable to provide care themselves. Most of the caregivers are women, often single, and living near or beneath the poverty line. Many are the children's grandmothers.

The audit identified numerous problems with screening prospective caregivers for safety, including some cases where placements were approved in spite of the presence of an adult in the home with a troubling criminal record or previous child protection concerns. It also found some placements occurring without anyone from government seeing the child or assessing the home's suitability.

Although these children and youth are not in a formal care arrangement such as foster care, they are still vulnerable, and the audit concluded that government still has a responsibility for their safety. It also pointed out that while no new applicants are being accepted into the CIHR program, thousands of children and youth continue to live with relatives under the program. The final report makes 10 recommendations, including that government commit to going back and carrying out proper screening for those children and offering better supports, where needed, to family members providing care.

Overall, the recommendations focus on creating a more effective and rigorous screening policy and practice when out-of-home placements are being considered under the new Extended Family Program.

Issue Report – Sexual Abuse Intervention Program

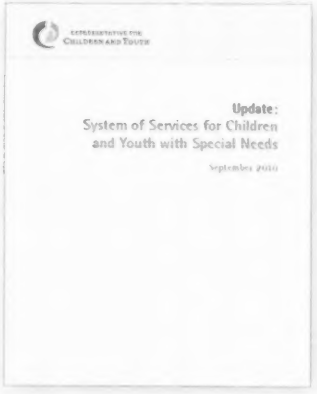


B.C.'s Sexual Abuse Intervention Program (SAIP) was introduced in the 1990s to enhance services for child victims of sexual abuse and their families and for youth under age 12 with sexual behaviour problems. In 2005, the program was reviewed by an independent contractor, and 15 recommendations were put forward to the government.

The Representative's review found that, in general, progress had been made in improving the program since 2005. However, the Representative's review was limited in its capacity to measure the program's effectiveness and responsiveness. Without program and client information, it was difficult to assess service levels and identify areas that may need strengthening.

The report released in 2010 makes five recommendations with an emphasis on making the program more evidence-based, with more attention to measuring outcomes and evaluating effectiveness.

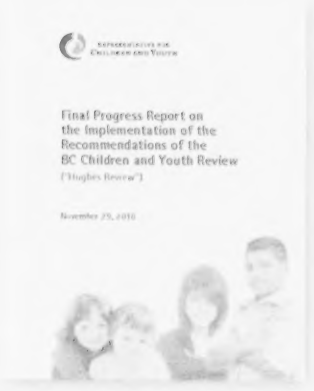
Update: System of Services for Children and Youth with Special Needs



Released in September 2010, this is the third report from RCY examining the responsiveness and effectiveness of services for children and youth with special needs. It provides an overview of key changes to the system since June 2008, when government announced a transfer of responsibility for services from Community Living BC to the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The report makes five recommendations to improve services for children, youth and families. These include better, more consistent communication with families and service providers, immediate engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders and an increased focus on quality assurance.

Final Progress Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the BC Children and Youth Review ("Hughes Review")



This was the third and final report on the Hughes Review, whose recommendations led to the creation of the Representative for Children and Youth Office. The first Representative's progress report, in 2007, reviewed all 62 Hughes Review recommendations. Fifteen were assessed as complete or fully operational, leaving 47 to be further assessed. The second report, the following year, re-examined 15 recommendations previously assessed as incomplete, leaving 32 to be further assessed.

The final report re-examines 27 recommendations previously assessed as incomplete and finds that, as of November 2010, 15 were implemented and one was underway. MCFD's progress on 11 others was judged to be unsatisfactory.

Although the 2010 report is the last to examine progress on specific Hughes recommendations, at the time of its release the Representative emphasized that the Hughes Review's recommendations had not been addressed adequately. The Representative noted that major themes such as quality assurance, organizational learning, public accountability and decentralization also continued to be inadequately addressed.

It is hoped that MCFD will begin issuing a regular 'report card' measuring progress in these areas, to provide the public and child-serving stakeholders with an assessment of whether B.C.'s children and youth are better served today and tomorrow, than when Mr. Hughes tabled his review. The Representative would be involved in working with the ministry on this assessment.

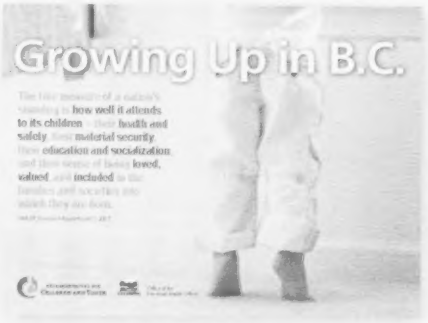
The Representative's Office will also continue to publicly report out on progress in areas such as consistency, outcomes and equity.

Joint Report

Where feasible, the Representative collaborates with other public bodies, agencies and post-secondary institutions in conducting research and developing reports. This allows the Representative's Office to benefit from the wisdom of others and ensures that a broad and integrated perspective is provided. The following report was developed jointly with other agencies in 2010/11:

Growing Up in B.C.

This report, developed jointly with the Provincial Health Officer, provides a critical starting point for improving circumstances and outcomes for B.C.'s children and youth. It answers a number of fundamental questions, including:



- How well are children and youth across the province doing?
- What is happening with children and youth in the care of the government?
- What is unique about the well-being of Aboriginal children and youth?
- What do young people think are important indicators of their own well-being?

The report is a ground-breaking examination of outcomes in six important aspects of child well-being: health, learning, safety, behaviour, family economic well-being and family, peer and community connections. It brings the voices of youth to the forefront and provides a broad and balanced picture of B.C.'s young people from infancy through adolescence.

The ultimate goal is to identify a detailed set of indicators that can influence child and youth health and well-being and that can be tracked by government over time.

Updates on the Implementation of Previous Report Recommendations

Reports from the Representative's Office make practical recommendations designed to foster real improvements in the child- and youth-serving system. These recommendations are tracked by the Representative to determine what progress has been made.

Staff meet regularly with officials from ministries to discuss the recommendations and their implementation. The Representative also provides regular reports on the status of the recommendations to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, the committee of the legislature that serves as the primary link between the Representative and government.

Along with a roadmap for tracking progress, recommendations from the Representative's reports also serve to stimulate debate and critical analysis, raising public awareness and supporting improvements in services for vulnerable children and youth.

In 2010/11, a number of recommendations resulted in improvements that are worth specific mention:

- MCFD adopted an interim measure to better meet requirements for reporting critical injuries, as recommended in the Representative's *Special Report: Reporting of Critical Injuries and Deaths to the Representative for Children and Youth*. Although no formal reporting policy had yet been established by the end of the fiscal year, MCFD had begun reporting injuries in a number of additional areas. As a result, the number of critical injuries reported to RCY increased significantly.
- Responding to the Representative's June 2010 report *No Shortcuts to Safety: Doing Better for Children Living with Extended Family*, MCFD introduced a Consolidated Criminal Record Check (CCRC) for all out-of-care options, including the Extended Family Program and Child in the Home of a Relative. A CCRC is performed by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and encompasses seven databases from both B.C. and Canada.
- On March 31, 2011, MCFD appointed a Provincial Director of Child Welfare to provide greater accountability and improve child protection practice. This decision directly addresses a key concern of the Representative that arose from the Hughes progress updates, the last of which was released in 2010.
- Several further improvements were made to government policy and practice in response to the Representative's 2009 report *Honouring Christian Lee – No Private Matter: Protecting Children Living with Domestic Violence*:
  - Best-practice guidelines for child protection and violence and against women were updated in November 2010.
  - Advanced risk assessment training for police, Crown, victim service workers and child welfare workers was completed during 2010/11.
  - MCFD also implemented a new Immediate Safety Assessment factor titled "Intimate Partner Violence." This allows child welfare workers to assess a child's risk of harm from exposure to acts of physical and emotional violence, and the possible harm caused by abuse and violence outside the home, such as during access visits or when mothers are stalked or harassed by ex-partners.

Andrew Robinson, Associate Deputy Representative, addresses the guests at a dinner honouring children in care during the Gathering Our Voices Youth Conference in Prince Rupert, March 2010.

RCY staff host an information booth at the 2010 Vancouver Pride Festival. Outreach at such events is an important part of the RCY's advocacy work with youth.

Outreach and Communications

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Representative and staff from her Office take part in major community events to help raise awareness of their work and the services they offer to children, youth and families.

In 2010/11, staff set up information booths, talked with the public and distributed materials at the following events and conferences:

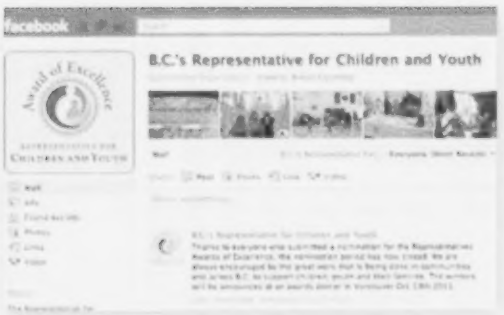
- National Aboriginal Days, Trout Lake, Vancouver (June 2010)
- Voices of Communities Conference, Interior Health Authority, Clinical Ethics Committee (June 2010)
- Victoria Pride (July 2010)
- Vancouver Pride (August 2010)
- Union of B.C. Municipalities Annual Conference (September 2010)
- BC Association of Social Workers Annual General Meeting (Nov 2010)
- CanAssist Forum (February 2011)
- Gathering our Voices Provincial Aboriginal Youth Conference (March 2011)
- 4th International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Conference (March 2011)
- Surrounded by Cedar Aboriginal Agency Fair (March 2011).

Media Requests

The Representative and staff responded to hundreds of requests from the media for interviews and information throughout the year. Topics include, for example, individual reports, high-profile issues involving children and youth, domestic violence, the process for reporting critical injuries and deaths, and the Representative's role as President of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates. These interviews help increase awareness of the Representative's work and build public confidence in the child- and youth-serving systems.

New Facebook Presence

To reach out farther through different social media, RCY created a page on Facebook during 2010/11. Facebook is a proven way to interact with children, youth and other interested British Columbians. The site has many followers and much interaction with the RCY stakeholder audience.



Outreach

Continuing efforts to increase awareness of the Representative's work, 310 packages of information and materials were mailed to the following organizations and offices during the period of this report:

- multi-cultural and immigrant settlement agencies
- inner city/alternate schools
- health authorities
- service agencies located in northern B.C.
- MLA constituency offices.

In addition to the normal publication distribution process and in an effort to share the knowledge learned, the following reports were shared with key stakeholders:

Fragile Lives, Fragmented Systems: Strengthening Supports for Vulnerable Infants was mailed to First Nations bands across the province. The aggregate report takes an in-depth look at the lives and deaths of 21 B.C. infants, 15 of whom were Aboriginal.

Growing Up in B.C. was mailed to principals across B.C's school system, to medical deans at universities, to schools of social work and child and youth care and to a broad cross-section of public agencies. The report takes a sweeping look at young lives across the province, using as wide a lens as possible to examine the well-being of British Columbia's children and youth.

Representative's 2010 Awards of Excellence

The Representative for Children and Youth's annual awards recognize and encourage excellence in British Columbia's child- and youth-serving systems.

In 2010, four British Columbia organizations and one individual were recognized at an awards dinner for their dedication to making a difference in the lives of B.C.'s vulnerable children and youth. Award winners were:

- **Youth Leadership** – Rachel Malek. Rachel was recognized for her involvement in a number of innovative leadership activities at Parksville Alternative Secondary School, and for her dedication to improving the lives of marginalized groups. Rachel is a passionate advocate for youth and is pursuing an academic program to expand her understanding and work.

Sam Martorana of WestJet (sponsor), Rachel Malek and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

- **Advocacy** – First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. First Call is unique in Canada in bringing together organizations and people from many sectors to focus on advocacy for children and youth and best practices in service delivery. These partnerships have provided expert advice to provincial and federal governments about the needs of B.C.'s children, youth and families.

Lynn Roberts of Coast Capital Savings (sponsor), Andrina Perry of First Call, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond and Adrienne Montani, also of First Call

- **Innovative Services** – Inter-Regional at-Risk Youth Link (IRAYL) is a cross community/cross government program that provides support and resources for youth who congregate on and around the Sky Train across the Lower Mainland. Pacific Community Resources Society, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Police and TransLink all support this program to avert serious incidents on the Sky Train, in the community, and in the lives of high-risk youth.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, presenter Dr. Samantha Nutt, members of IRAYL and presenter Chantal Kreviazuk

- **Cultural Heritage and Diversity** – Nagantsi'i'stk (ancestors/grandmothers) Group. Members of the Grandmothers Group of Lax kw'alaams recognized the need to come together to provide the opportunity for children to be heard in their community. The group works so that youth can be groomed in culture, and advocates with government and their community to return to traditional ways of caring for children.

The Naggntsi'i'stk Group receives its award from the Representative

- **Service Provision** – Raincoast Education Society (RES). The mission of the RES is to foster environmental and community stewardship, recognizing the inextricable links between environmental health and community health and that empowering children and youth as environmental citizens means empowering them as individuals and active citizens of their community. RES has been active in Tofino, Ucuelet and the First Nations communities in Clayoquot Sound for more than 10 years.

Joan McIntyre, Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth; Josie Osborne of Raincoast; and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Champions for Children and Youth 2010 Summit

CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
THE 2010 BC SUMMIT

Building on the work of our first Summit in 2008, the 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit was a unique two-day event, held October 18-19 in Vancouver that brought together a wide range of national and international experts, front-line workers, and most importantly children and youth, all around the key themes from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Summit's impressive speakers, knowledgeable panellists and committed delegates came together to shape a future that protects and improves the well-being of vulnerable children across the province.

Several dozen prominent speakers from throughout Canada and the world presented at this year's Summit. They included National Chief Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo, Olympic medalist Clara Hughes, Andy Pithouse of Cardiff University, Wales, Diane DePanfilis of the University of Maryland, and Barbara Needell of the University of California, Berkeley. Along with the speakers and presentations, the Summit featured the release of a unique report called *Growing Up in B.C.* Developed in partnership with the Provincial Health Officer, *Growing Up in B.C.* is a groundbreaking examination of six important aspects of child well-being. It illustrates how young people are doing today and provides a set of baseline data we can use to guide our work and measure progress as we go forward.

The Summit provided many opportunities for youth to participate and to be heard throughout the two days.

A summary report on the Champions Summit is also available online, along with photos, videos and links to experts' presentations. For details, see the Events section of the Representative's website www.rcybc.ca.

Ronald Sz from Gleneagle Secondary shares an outstanding slam poet performance at the 2010 Champions for Children and Youth Summit in Vancouver.

Speaking Up on the National Stage

In June 2010, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth was elected president of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates, a national alliance of children's advocates appointed by provincial and territorial governments.

That same month, the council released a report titled *Aboriginal Children and Youth in Canada Must Do Better*. Citing "significant deep-seated gaps between the health, education and safety of Aboriginal children and youth in Canada and their non-Aboriginal peers," the report urges national leaders to craft a Canada-wide plan to measure and report on the progress of young Aboriginal people, and help to bring their voices to the fore. The paper is available on the Representative's website.

In March 2011, the council submitted a paper to the House of Commons Select Standing Committee on Human Rights and Justice. The paper expressed concerns about Bill C-4, *An Act to Amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act*, also referred to as Sébastien's Law.

In the paper, the council articulated serious concerns about negative impacts for youth that could result from passage of the bill in its current form. It recommended seven changes and called on the federal government to ensure that the youth criminal justice system complies with the provisions and the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The paper is posted on the Representative's website, in the Resources section.

Working More Closely with First Nations

In December 2010, the Representative signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the First Nations Directors Forum, which represents the province's delegated First Nations child welfare agencies.

Generally, the MOU commits all parties to continue working together to improve the outcomes, safety and well-being of First Nations children in B.C. Specifically, it allows the parties to officially work together to advocate on behalf of First Nations children and youth to ensure that they are fully supported and receive culturally appropriate, quality services from governments and agencies.

The MOU is posted on the Representative's website, in the Events section.

I have a right to receive guidance and encouragement to maintain my cultural heritage.
My ceremonial Drum!
This is my favourite Sari!
This is my grandmother's recipe from back home!
Don't cut my hair without considering my family's cultural practices and beliefs!
Saying my daily prayer!

Engaging Support from Municipal Leaders

The Representative and members of her advocacy staff provided important and practical advice at the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) 2010 convention. They led delegates through an interactive clinic on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and demonstrated how to use this tool to build the sort of child-centred communities that vulnerable young citizens need and deserve.

The Representative also talked about economic conditions and the impacts of poverty on children and families.

The UBCM went on to endorse several resolutions that addressed related topics. These included three resolutions to lobby the Province for increased funding and support for mental health, street outreach and addiction services for youth and adults. Delegates also endorsed a resolution to emphasize – with all B.C. political party leaders – the importance of developing a province-wide poverty reduction plan.

At the convention, delegates endorsed the following resolution:

WHEREAS poverty and its effects is something that each local government is faced with:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the importance of a poverty reduction plan be communicated to the leaders of all political parties in British Columbia highlighting the need to provide adequate and accessible income support for the non-employed, improve the earnings and working conditions of those in the low wage workforce and improve food security for low-income individuals and families.

To be fed, clothed and nurtured the same as others in their communities and to be given the same quality of care as other children in their placement.

RCY Meetings

The Representative and her staff meet with a wide variety of stakeholders each year. Here are some of the meetings and events that were held or attended this year.

Child and Youth Serving Organizations

Adoptive Families Association of BC
BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
BC Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of BC
Caring for First Nation Children Society
Child Welfare League of Canada
Child and Nature Alliance
Child and Youth Mental Health Advocacy Coalition
Federation of BC Youth in Care Network
Federation of Community Social Services of BC
First Call: BC Child & Youth Advocacy Coalition
First Nations Directors' Forum
First Nations Schools Association
Haida Child and Family Services
Human Early Learning Partnership
Nisga'a Valley Child and Family Services
Office of the Children's Advocate, Manitoba
Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Ontario
UNICEF – Child Rights presentation, Coquitlam
Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society
Yukon Child and Youth Advocate

Aboriginal Leadership/Organizations

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
Council of the Haida Nation
First Nations Child and Family Welfare Council
First Nations Education Steering Committee
First Nations Directors Forum
First Nations Health Council
First Nation Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC
Penelakut Health Unit/H'ulh-etun Health Society
Secwepemc Nation – Strategic Planning Session Splatsin
Tsawwassen First Nation
Usma Child and Family Services, Port Alberni

Government Organizations

Advisory Committee on Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs
Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates
Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Winnipeg: Youth Sharing Circle
City of Vancouver
BC Housing – Extreme Weather Response program
Burnaby Youth Custody Services Centre
Canada School of Public Service
Community Living BC
Department of Justice Canada
Interim First Nations Child and Family Wellness Council
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health Services
Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Housing and Social Development
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Northern Health
Office of the Auditor General
Office of the B.C. Ombudsperson
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee of B.C.
Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth
Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth – Child Poverty Forum
Union of British Columbia Municipalities
Vital Statistics Agency
Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office

Academic

Camosun College
Simon Fraser University
University of British Columbia – Conference: Health & Wellbeing in Children, Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities
University of British Columbia – House of Learning and Museum of Anthropology
University of Northern British Columbia – National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
University of Toronto – Faculty of Social Work
University of Victoria – Asia-Pacific Initiatives
University of Victoria – Centre for Youth and Society

Other

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies
BC Civil Liberties Association
BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association
BC Government Employees Union
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
BC Society of Transition Houses Canadian Institute of Health Information
Community Social Planning Council
BC Teachers' Federation
Burnside Gorge Community Association
Child Welfare League of America – national conference
Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver
Federation of Community Social Services
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Annual International Conference
International Looking after Children Conference
Law Foundation of B.C. – Provincial Training Conference for Legal Advocates
Nezul Be Hunuy Child and Family Services – Community consultations
Parent Support Services Society of BC
Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research – Policy-Research Symposium
STEPS Forward
United Way of the Lower Mainland – Middle Years Development Instrument
Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter

RCY Speaking Engagements

Child and Youth Serving Organizations

BC Association of School Business Officials
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
BC Community Action Program for Children
B.C. Healthy Child Development Alliance
BC School Superintendents' Association – Lower Mainland
Canadian Society for the Investigation of Child Abuse
Child Health BC – Social Pediatrics Workshop
ORCA Children's Advocacy Centre Society
Queen Alexandra Foundation – Child Rights
Sentinel Secondary School, West Vancouver – Aboriginal Children and Youth in the Education System
Vancouver Island Action for Children
Youth Homelessness Conference: Imagine Best Practices – Terrace

Aboriginal Leadership/Organizations

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society
First Nations Directors Forum
First Nations Education Steering Committee
First Nations Schools Association
Nisga'a Lisims Government – Special Assembly: Children's Rights and Social Planning

Government Organizations

Department of Justice – Youth Corrections and Mental Health
Interior Health Authority – Clinical Ethics Committee, Voices of Communities conference
Ministry of Attorney General – Crown Prosecutor training
Ministry of Children and Family Development: Aboriginal Infant & Supported Child Development

Other

Bridges for Women Society
BC Centre for Ability
CanAssist Forum: Building Bridges – Planning and Preparing for the Future
Health Officers' Council of British Columbia
School District #62 – Professional Development Day
University of British Columbia School of Social Work, Richard B. Splane Lecture Series
Pivot Legal Society

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Representative for Children and Youth:

Report on the Statement of Expenditures

I have audited the statement of expenditures of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth for the year ended March 31, 2011. The statement of expenditures has been prepared by management using the government's Core Policy and Procedures Manual.

Management's Responsibility

Management is responsible for the preparation of the statement of expenditures in accordance with government's Core Policy and Procedures Manual described in Note 1, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the statement of expenditures that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

My responsibility is to express an opinion on the statement of expenditures based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that I comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the statement of expenditures is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the statement of expenditures. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the statement of expenditures, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to ORCY's preparation and fair presentation of the statement of expenditures in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of ORCY's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates, if any, made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the statement of expenditures.

In my view, the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial information in the statement of expenditures of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth for the year ended March 31, 2011, is prepared in all material respects, in accordance with government's Core Policy and Procedures Manual.

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying my opinion, I draw attention to Note 1 to the statement of expenditure, which describes the basis of accounting. The statement of expenditures is prepared to provide information to the Province of British Columbia. As a result, the statement may not be suitable for another purpose.

Victoria, British Columbia
September 9, 2011

John Doyle, MAcc, CA
Auditor General

Fiscal Year 2010/11 Statement of Expenditures

Expense Type	2010/11 Estimates $	2010/11 Actual $	2009/10 Actual $
Salaries of permanent and temporary employees	3,726,000	3,417,359	3,623,465
Employee Benefits	950,000	875,387	898,542
Travel	201,000	215,828	230,317
Greenhouse gas reduction measure	-	-	673
Public Service Agency services	-	-	18,865
Accommodation & Real Estate services	-	-	272,747
Corporate Accounting System services	-	-	24,000
Workplace Technology services	-	-	313,358
Professional services	459,000	584,466	481,412
Information systems	429,000	448,893	98,061
Office and business expenses	398,000	419,194	286,845
Informational advertising/publications	-	4,947	15,391
Utilities, materials and supplies	14,000	7,338	8,739
Operating equipment and vehicles	26,000	5,636	5,946
Amortization	60,000	61,301	47,923
Building occupancy	645,000	569,983	338,516
Transfers - General	62,000	325,000	325,000
Interest Costs - Non Public Debt	-	639	552
Other expenses	3,000	1,128	1,167
Total Expenses	**6,973,000**	**6,937,099**	**6,991,519**

Note 1 - The statement of expenditures is presented in accordance with the B.C. Government's financial and management policy outlined in the Core Policy and Procedures Manual at: http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/fmb/manuals/CPM/CPMtoc.htm

Approved on behalf of the Office:

Signature

September 9, 2011

Date

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